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## CSD *News Release*

**Monday, November 18, 2002**

### **PINK HIBISCUS MEALYBUG UPDATE**

The Miami-Dade County Cooperative Extension Service (a division of the Miami-Dade County Consumer Services Department - CSD), the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) and the University of Florida (UF) will host a workshop on Friday, November 22 to provide an update on efforts to combat the Pink Hibiscus Mealybug.

The workshop will be held at the John D. Campbell Agricultural Center, 18710 SW 288 Street in Homestead beginning at 1:00 p.m. It is free and open to the public.

Charles Yurgalevitch, an Urban Horticultural Extension Agent with Miami-Dade County Cooperative Extension Service, Catharine Mannion, a University of Florida Entomologist and Lou Lodyga of the Division of Plant Industry at the FDACS will give a 2-hour update on the latest recommendations for control of the PHM in the landscape and nursery industries.

The Pink Hibiscus Mealybug (PHM) was discovered at a Miramar residence in Broward County last June, the first time this plant pest had been detected in the US since a California outbreak in 1999. Following the Miramar discovery a program of biological control was implemented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in collaboration with experts at FDACS, the Miami-Dade County Cooperative Extension Service and the University of Florida.

The PHM attacks more than 200 plant species, including many found in Florida. These include hibiscus and other ornamental plants, citrus, guava, mango, avocado, tomato, cucumbers, and peppers among others. It is a very tiny (3mm) sap-sucking insect that forms colonies on the host plant and can grow into large cotton-like masses of white, waxy deposits on branches and leaves if left undisturbed. It feeds on the sap of the plant and releases toxic substances causing injury and death to the plant, but is harmless to humans. It is spread by wind, by ants, or it can be stuck on clothing or on the hair of animals.

Although it occurs in most tropical areas of the world, the PHM is not native to this hemisphere and the natural predators which control its spread in countries like India and Egypt, where it has existed for decades, are not a natural part of our environment.

An outbreak which began in Grenada in the early 1980s spread to several countries in the eastern Caribbean where it caused severe economic dislocation to the agricultural sector in those countries. It was eventually brought under control in the mid-1990s by a biological program which involved releasing the predators into the environment.

In addition to the biological control program which has been undertaken in Florida, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the USDA and the Division of Plant Industry in the FDACS have appealed to members of the public to help in combating this potentially devastating plant pest.

How you can help.

1. Ensure that all plants, fruits, and vegetables brought into the United States, particularly from Central America and the Caribbean, are properly inspected and cleared at U.S. ports of entry.
2. Monitor all imported plants for white fluffy masses on buds, stems, fruit, and roots.
3. Report suspect pink hibiscus mealybug infestations to your local office of the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services-- Division of Plant Industry (Miami - 305-252-4360), or your local USDA office (Miami - 305-526-2825).

More information about the pink hibiscus mealybug is available on the FDACS website at <http://doacs.state.fl.us/~pi/enpp/ento/pink.htm> and on the USDA website at <http://aphisweb.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/phmpaler.pdf>

Visit the Miami-Dade County Consumer Services Department website at [www.miamidade.gov/csd/](http://www.miamidade.gov/csd/).

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*The Miami Dade Consumer Services Department is an agency of Miami-Dade County government that protects consumers through complaint mediation, business regulation, and consumer education. The Department operates the Consumer Hotline (305) 375-3677, a central telephone number for consumer complaints and information.*